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# Near East/North Africa Report

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FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

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## NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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REBELS REPORTED RAIDING THE SOVIET UNION

Tehran KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL in English 1 May 82 p 4

[Text]

ISLAMABAD, April 30 (Dispatches) — Afgghan rebel groups regularly make raids across the border into the Soviet Union, an Australian freelance photographer just back from the area said here Thursday.

John Monfries, 28, said, "The raids are not of great military significance but just to show they can do it". The incursions, he added, had forced Soviet authorities to move back power lines and observation posts guarding the border.

Monfries, a former clerk with the Australian defense department in Adelaide, said he spent three months with a rebel group based near Nazar-i-Sharif, capital of Afghanistan's Balkh Province bordering the Soviet Union. The rebel base was in Tangy Gorge about 15 miles (25 km) from the frontier.

Monfries, describing the rarely reported situation along the Afghan-Soviet border, told journalists the rebel groups also attacked Soviet ships travelling on the Oxus River marking the frontier.

The rebel forays into the Soviet Union, he said, involved guerrillas crossing the border to blow up power lines and attack military positions and then returning the same night.

Monfries said the Muslim rebels claimed they had many supporters among the mainly muslim population in border areas of Soviet Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan.

Western diplomats have said

the Soviet Union is becoming worried that the fighting inside Afghanistan could lead to a similar resistance movement among Soviet Muslims.

Monfries said one main rebel group in the area was composed of about 4,000 fighters led by a 35-year-old ex-teacher named Zabiullah.

The other main rebel force, he said, looked to Iran's Islamic revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, for guidance.

Its members called themselves the Susman Nasar group, Monfries said, and were strongly anti-American, anti-Soviet and anti-Chinese.

Monfries added that he had accompanied rebels on two raids into Nazar-i-Sharif, which is one of their regular targets and has both Soviet civilians and soldiers stationed there.

**Soviet POWs Speak on Losses**

Meanwhile, a Soviet officer captured last month said an important Soviet airbase located just north of Kabul, the Afghan capital, has lost a number of warplanes in raids by Afghan guerrillas.

The base has been attacked three times, each time with rocket launchers, said Capt. Alexander Petrovitch Sidielniko, one of five Soviet soldiers held by insurgents near this overrun Afghan Army post, 12 miles west of the Pakistan border.

So far, 25 MiG fighters and 13 helicopters have been destroyed, said Sidielniko, interviewed in the presence of armed guards and speaking through interpreters sup-

plied by his captors. He said he had been in Afghanistan since November 1980.

Sidielniko, a native of the Ukraine, said his armored unit of 80 men and 25 tanks was part of a security brigade at Bagram Airbase, the biggest Soviet military air installation in Afghanistan, about 30 miles north of Kabul. The unit was never sent out to fight, the prisoner asserted.

However, he claimed he saw Afghan women and children killed in Soviet shelling of villages and house-to-house searches.

We didn't come here for that, he said through Afghan translators. I have seen with my own eyes, Russian troops killing innocent people, breaking the locks of houses and then looting them for souvenirs to be sent back home.

Another Russian captive 19 year old Kissilov-Verli Yurkevitch, who served in a motorized rifle unit, said he was unaware of the use of chemical weapons by Soviet troops. If they were used, a special brigade would handle them, he said without elaboration.

Sidielniko, one of five prisoners held here by the Gulbiddin Hekmetyar faction of the Hezbi Islami (Islamic Party), said that in the

Soviet Union he had been told he would be fighting Americans, Chinese, Britons, Pakistanis and Egyptians along with Afghan rebels.

That is what we were told before we left Russia, he told a group of western, Chinese and Iranian reporters at this fortified resistance base in the Afghan Province of Zabul.

Sidielniko, presented to reporters in pajama-like Afghan shirt and trousers, said he braced himself for immediate execution when he was taken prisoner March 15. Yurkevitch, captured in the same area the month before, said he had similar fears.

We had been told we would have our heads cut off if we were caught, Yurkevitch said. But were being well treated. We're being provided with good food. I don't think they will kill us. Someday, we hope to return (home).

Base commander Zaffaruddin Khan said their fate had not yet been decided. Negotiations now are under way with the International Committee of the Red Cross to arrange a possible exchange, he said, adding that if talks fail the prisoners would be tried under Islamic law and most probably shot.

CSO: 4600/470

COOPERATIVES TO BE EXPANDED

Kabul KABUL NEW TIMES in English 28 Apr 82 p 3

[Interview with N. Mawaj, president of the Central Council of Peasants' Cooperatives]

[Text]

Over 155 agricultural cooperatives, 15 consumer cooperatives, three handicrafts cooperatives and 20 consumer goods stores are to start functioning in the current Afghan year (beginning March 21, 1982) said Najmurrehman Mawaj, president of the office of the Central Council of the Peasants' Cooperatives of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in an interview with the Kabul New Times reporter.

He said that the first congress of the central council of the peasants cooperatives of the DRA was held on Qaus 21, 1359 H.S. where Babrak Karmal, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and Presidnet of the Revolutionary Council in part of his speech said: "Our party aims at ensuring the well-being and prosperity of the broad masses of the people of Afghanistan. The People's De-

mocratic Party of Afghanistan which has emerged from amongst the masses reflects the interests of the broad masses of the working class and all progressive forces. It honestly serves the people and the homeland. The government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan represents the political sovereignty of the workers, peasants, other toiling masses and national and democratic forces in the country. It has been founded by the will and backing of all working people and genuine patriots of our beloved homeland Afghanistan".

He added that the peasants cooperatives are entrusted with the heavy responsibility for boosting production and creating invincible spirit of cooperation among the peasants and members of the cooperatives.

Mawaj said that despite the conspiracies by the sold out bandits led by

the US imperialism and its accomplices DRA peasants' cooperatives union has achieved considerable successes.

In response to another question he said that the registered cooperatives numbered 1,217. The condition for acceptance in the cooperatives is active participation in the activities of the cooperatives.

He said that the cooperatives includes the agricultural services consumer, handicraft and gardening cooperatives. The union is determined to create experimental cooperatives of agricultural services in Kabul, Jauzjan and Badakhshan provinces.

Speaking on the work plan of the union in the current year, he said that in the light of the resolutions of the countrywide conference of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the programme of action and the cooperatives law, peasants' coo-

peratives are envisaged to be found in Badakhshan, Kunduz, Baghlan, Faryab, Balkh, Badghis, Kunar and Samangan provinces and in 28 districts. The extraordinary congress and alternative plenums are scheduled to be held in the current Afghan year (1361).

He said that last year peasants' cooperatives were established in Kabul, Nangarhar and Herat, provinces and in Bagrami, Deh Sabz and Char Asiab districts of Kabul province and the Kama, Momand Dara, Kuz Kunar districts and Bati Kot sub-district of Nangarhar province and started functioning regularly.

Likewise, the second plenum of the union was also held last year. Three cooperatives renewed their organisation and three consumer cooperatives started functioning last year, he concluded.

CSO: 4600/470



# DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ASSESSES CURRENT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

Tehran KAYHAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 29 Apr 82 p 10

/Article: "Our Brother Azizi, Deputy Foreign Minister, to KAYHAN AL-'ARABI: Israel Has Withdrawn from Sinai So That America Can Reoccupy It"/

/Text/ The American military myth was smashed in the desert of Tabas and through the preparation for the Iraqi war imposed on Iran, which was based on the thwarted American attack on Iran and then the most recent unsuccessful coup attempt, under the leadership of the traitor Qotbzadeh.

America has wriggled out of the conditions of the Algiers agreement regarding disclosure of the buried Shah's property and assets in its jurisdiction. America has flagrantly and continuously supported evil Israeli aggression, and the great satan has played games with the resolutions of the United Nations.

The Iraqi regime ignores and evades the humane Iranian plan on exchanging visits of families of prisoners.

In addition, the United Nations delegate to Iran on the Afghan issue has been informed of the firm Iranian position that the Moslem Afghan people alone have the right to determine their destiny by themselves.

This is what our meeting with our brother Ahmad Azizi, the deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, addressed itself to. Here is the text of the meeting:

Question: Two years have elapsed since the unsuccessful American attack on Tabas: what facts has this aggression revealed to public opinion? What effects have resulted from it during this period?

/Answer/ What cannot be denied is that the operation of detaining the American hostages in the spy nest in Tehran and the unsuccessful attack on Tabas that followed it have proved to the Islamic world in particular and to the downtrodden in general the failure of the great satan and all other powers in the world to impose their intrigues and schemes on the Iran of the Islamic revolution, which has held fast to the force of will, confidence in ultimate victory and labor in the divine context, since it is the people working in this context alone who are graced by divine care, as the commander of the Islamic nation, Emam Khomeyni, has pointed out.

The sura of the elephant in the holy Koran took form with the smashing of the military myth of the great satan in the desert of Tabas in its attempt to bring down our young Islamic republic through its perfidious aggression.

Question: The Tabas operation also failed to obtain the release of the hostages by force; as is well known, it was the conditions of the Algiers agreement that brought that about. Has America committed itself to the declared conditions?

/Answer/ In this area, Iran has succeeded in regaining the main portion of its financial deposits from America, in accordance with the agreement. Naturally the Islamic republic has faced a number of American obstacles and problems, but in the end it managed, by the grace of God, to overcome them.

America has not yet fulfilled its promise on informing the Islamic Republic of the volume of the Shah's deposits and possessions in its jurisdiction and has sought justifications through interpretations that conform to its interests in regard to this issue; America has alleged that it must first inform the family of the Shah by law before conveying the information to us, and this is totally contrary to the sections of the Algiers agreement.

In another area, one must mention here that Iran has managed to overturn the many flimsy suits that American bodies filed against it in American courts after the release of the hostages in accordance with the Algiers agreement. On the basis of this agreement the American courts have invalidated suits filed by some of the hostages who were detained in Tehran and have demanded specific compensation from the Islamic republic.

Question: There are people who link the latest unsuccessful coup attempt to the Tabas attack. What is your interpretation of this?

/Answer/ The Tabas operation, the Iraqi war that has been imposed on us, and finally the unsuccessful conspiracy that Qotbzadeh led are all in reality links in a chain of American conspiracies against the Islamic revolution.

The situation with Qotbzadeh and other conspirators confirms the lack of an Islamic vision or a genuine Islamic mentality among those people, underlining the love of domination and control over others that conspirators like Qotbzadeh possess--condemning their calculations and expectations to catastrophic failure in advance.

Question: What about the Iraqi war that has been imposed on us?

/Answer/ Although the war of aggression has gone on more than a year and a half, it was rooted, as is well known, in the unsuccessful American attack on Tabas, and today everyone knows that Saddam's war is in reality a war of the forces of international arrogance against our Islamic revolution. Nothing gives better proof of that than the volume of the support that the Baghdad regime is receiving for its unjust war and the bodies that are offering it this support.

The results the Iraqi war of aggression have produced can truly be a lesson for all the people, nations and downtrodden of the world.

The experience of the war has proved that no matter how great armies may be in terms of numbers and materiel, they will fail to realize any victories unless they enjoy popular backing and function on the basis of proper goals and demands.

When our Islamic army is strong enough to take more than 15,000 Iraqi soldiers prisoner in 3 or 4 days of war, and when the Iraqi troops themselves surrender to our Islamic forces in droves, this, if it proves anything, proves the Iraqi Moslem people's support for our rights and our legitimate demands to repel and thwart this Saddamist aggression.

Question: Since we have been talking about the imposed war, what about the Islamic Republic's plan for the exchange of visits of families of prisoners?

/Answer/ The Islamic Republic has taken more than one step in this regard and has asserted to the world its total readiness to carry out this humanitarian plan with all possible speed more than once.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself has prepared a plan for the exchange of visits by families of prisoners and has conveyed that to the International Red Cross.

The deputy minister of foreign affairs for international and economic affairs has taken trips at the head of an Iranian to Kuwait, has held discussions and has reached agreement with officials there on the transit of families of prisoners over Kuwaiti territory.

An Iranian delegation is also slated to make a visit to Turkey soon and hold discussions there on facilitating the transit of the families of prisoners over Turkish territory also.

The Islamic Republic is serious about its plan and its endeavor, but the Iraqi regime acting evasively on it, under foolish pretexts.

Question: Let us go back to the unsuccessful Tabas raid. On its second anniversary, Israeli aircraft brutally bombed southern Beirut, and Syria called for the expulsion of the Zionist entity from the United Nations. What is your position on all this?

/Answer/ In reality, it is our Foreign Ministry that first demanded that the international organization renounce its sin of granting international legitimacy to the Zionist entity. This would be done by having the organization withdraw its recognition of Israel today. Syria's demand was in support of our demand, and we hope that the other countries will declare their agreement and support for it.

This is in addition to the fact that we now have very experienced Islamic forces that are enamored of martyrdom /line missing/ and are prepared to make sacrifices and efforts at any moment anywhere in the world to make Islam triumph and to restore Islamic rights.

Question: What is your interpretation of the recent American threats to withdraw from the international organization if that withdraws its recognition of Israel?

/Answer/ This situation truly reveals a side of America's crimes in the framework of the United Nations to public opinion.

It also accurately shows that American policy is the prisoner of Zionist policy and the policy of the Zionists in Washington.

Question: There is heated talk nowadays about what is called the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Desert. How do you view the future of this so-called withdrawal in the light of the Israeli experience in the Golan?

/Answer/ What has happened in Sinai is nothing more than the replacement of Israeli forces by forces from the NATO alliance.

On the future of the so-called withdrawal from Sinai, we consider that this process will not be in the benefit of the Zionists and the capitulationist rulers in the region. The cries of "God is great" and "There is no god but Allah" are now being repeated in Jerusalem and occupied Palestine, and the Islamic revolution is also mounting in intensity in Egypt. This sort of Islamic movement must impose a state of affairs on the region and the world that sooner or later will be to the advantage of the Moslems and the downtrodden.

Question: A final question:

We are witnessing the second anniversary of America's crimes in Tabas. These days, Afghanistan is witnessing the bitterness of the fourth anniversary of the puppet Communist coup. On this occasion, the deputy foreign minister has said, in response to a question on the Iranian position on the latest mission of the United Nations delegate to Iran and Pakistan, in the context of the problem of the flagrant Soviet invasion of Afghanistan:

"The Islamic Republic's position on this issue is firm and clear. We believe in the need for the Soviet forces to depart from Afghanistan with all possible speed without conditions or restrictions, and we also consider that it is necessary to give the Moslem Afghan people their full rights to determine their destiny themselves without foreign intervention."

Our brother Azizi went on to say, "We have informed our brother the United Nations delegate to Iran of these conditions of ours and the delegate for his part has brought forth specific views which could be summarized as an appeal for the Islamic Republic to make greater efforts and endeavors on solving the Afghanistan issue."

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CSO: 4604/30

FOREIGN TRADE NATIONALIZATION BILL PASSED BY MAJLIS

Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 12 May 82 p 1

[Text] **TEHRAN (IRNA)** - In the open session of the Islamic Consultative Assembly the letter of resignation of Deputy Mohammad Yazdi from the Holy city of Qum was read.

Yazdi resigned from his seat in the Majlis because of being appointed as the head of an Administrative Justice Court.

During the session, which was chaired by Speaker Rafsanjani, the bill for the nationalization of foreign trade was approved after being discussed for several sessions.

The first deputy who spoke during the session was the deputy from Mashad, Khorasan province, Seyyed Muhammad Khamenei, who said that the experience of the past three years had shown that plots of the enemies of the revolution to damage and confine the Islamic Revolution of Iran have all been thwarted and produced no result.

The reason behind the success of the Iranian revolu-

tion, he said, was the continuous presence of people in the political scene of the country and their political awareness.

He further stressed that while the enemy would not be able to hurt the Iranian revolution, however, there remained the possibility that it would disguise itself as a friend and then carry out its vicious plans.

To nationalize foreign trade, the House decided to create a number of organizations as follows:

A purchase center, an export center, overseas offices, trade services agencies and an organization for accounting services.

In order to enact Article 44 of the Constitutional Law, the Ministry of Commerce was obliged to administrate the major executive duties of the foreign trade program as well as the regulations on the annual import, and exports on the basis of the following guidelines:

A. To avoid economical political and cultural dependence on foreign powers, especially the Superpowers.

B. To give priority to the Muslim and oppressed nations for expansion of commercial relations.

C. To avoid exchanges which are prohibited by Islamic principles.

D. To protect the internal production.

E. To prevent the tendency for consuming luxurious items and to provide an Islamic model of consumption.

F. To foresee as well as provide needs which are to be imported.

G. To expand the country's exports quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

H. To establish a balance between exports and imports, and

I. To avoid a single-export economy.

TEHRAN'S MAYOR SENDS MESSAGE TO PALESTINIAN CITIES

Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 12 May 82 p 2

[Text]

**TEHRAN, (IRNA) -** Tehran's mayor, Gholamhossein Delju sent message to the mayors of the occupied Palestinian cities in which he praised their strike as a move to confront the brutal Zionist oppression.

He referred to the Palestinian Muslims' recent uprising as a consequence of the ever rising Zionist brutality which was supported by US Imperialism and other international criminals.

He further condemned the so-called Human Rights Organizations' silence as collabora-

tion with the Zionists. The Palestinian Muslims would overcome the Zionist occupiers with the help of God, unity of expression and permanent struggle, just as the Iranian combatants defeated the Iraqi aggressors, he stressed.

He finally, expressed the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the mayor's strike throughout the occupied lands and added that the Iranian Islamic combatants would be soon in the company of their Palestinian Muslim brothers to liberate Ouds.

CSO: 4600/480

# SHIRAZI WARNS IRAQIS AGAINST 'ANOTHER' SADDAM

Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 13 May 82 pp 1, 3

[Text] MASHAD - Prominent clergy leader Ayatullah Shirazi yesterday warned the people of Iraq from being misled by either East or West plot to replace Saddam through a clandestine coup with another "who may appear to be good" but who will only be "a pawn in the service of their own interests."

The message issued on the occasion of the recent Iranian victories said that with the tremendous victories of the Muslim Forces, "we also commemorate the 17th of Rajab, the day of the massive movement of Iraqi people, under the leadership of Muslim clergy and the unsparing efforts of Ayatullah Muhammad Baqer Sadr who was martyred by Saddam's corrupt regime."

"Now that the chivalrous forces of the Islamic Republic are on the verge of totally destroying the corrupt Ba'athist

forces and now that thousands of the Iraqi invading troops have been taken captive and or surrendered themselves, we

call on the remnants of the shattered Iraqi army to lay down their arms and submit to Iranian forces," the message continued adding. This is the last opportunity for them to save their lives, and to repent of their sins toward Allah."

The message also said that the shattered Iraqi Army is not in a position to resist any longer due to the damages it has suffered and the low morale of its personnel even if the hired hands of exploiters in the region assist using all the means at their disposal.

The Ayatullah later stated in his communique that the time was ripe for the oppressed and deprived Muslims of Iraq who had suffered greatly under the yoke of the colonialist powers and the internal dicta-

torial regimes, to "break the chains of their servitude and topple the infidel Ba'athist regime through a mass uprising."

Addressing the Iraqi Muslim clergy, Ayatullah Shirazi invited them to unite and set aside all their differences if there are any, and consolidate the ranks of the Iraqi nation and found a sound Islamic regime similar to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Calling forcefully for the unity of the Iraqi people "side by side with their clergy" Ayatullah Shirazi then expressed the hope that the "time for victory over the pawns and hired hands of the foreign powers was near."

He concluded his message by warning the Iraqi people against any possible plot by Eastern, Western exploiters for replacing Saddam by another of their lackeys through what he called a "clandestine coup d'etat."

## LIMITATIONS IMPOSED ON JORDAN CROSSING

### Policy Favors Civilian Administration

TA311344 Tel Aviv 'AL HAMISHMAR in Hebrew 31 May 82 p 1

[Report by West Bank correspondent Q. Amnon]

[Text] Beginning tomorrow, the Civilian Administration will begin imposing administrative limitations on West Bank and Gaza Strip residents wanting to cross over to Jordan. From now on the inhabitants of the territories will not be able to obtain the crossing permits in Jericho as has previously been the case. They will be forced to approach the Civilian Administration offices or the Area Village Leagues in order to obtain the permits. Every request will be looked into for a few days and the person making the request will have to return to either the Civilian Administration offices or the Area Village Leagues in order to obtain it.

Bethlehem Mayor Ilyas Frayj reacted to the new impositions with irony, saying "They want us to grow fond of the Civilian Administration but the result will naturally be the opposite."

The limitations apply to men up to the age of 45. Males beyond that age would, as in the past, be able to obtain the permits in Jericho and cross the bridge.

The head of the Civilian Administration, Professor Menahem Milson, has explained to reporters that the objective of the new measures is to effect "order." The real goal, according to inhabitants of the territories, is to force the Palestinians to have contact with the Area Village Leagues, which they hate, or with the Civilian Administration, which they loathe just as much.

### Mukhtars To Process Papers

TA262119 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 2100 GMT 26 May 82

[Text] The Civilian Administration in Judaea and Samaria has transferred the handling of the forms for crossing the Jordan River bridges to Mukhtars in the villages and the urban districts. This privilege enhances the Mukhtars' political importance and diminishes that of the municipalities and the Area Village Leagues. The new regulations do not apply to the inhabitants of East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.



## Jordan Crossing Procedures

TA010905 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 0505 GMT 1 Jun 82

[Report by Arye Gus--recorded]

[Text] As of this morning residents of Judaea, Samaria and the Gaza district who want to cross over to Jordan must submit, from their place of residence, an exit permission form to the Civilian Administration. Within a day, so the residents are promised, the approved forms will be returned if no problems arise. The price of the stamps needed for the form is 400 shekels. Women and older people are exempted from the new arrangement, but youths must personally come to the Civilian Administration offices. For the last 10 years the practice has been that residents of the territories could go to the Jordan bridges, buy the necessary forms at the post, stamp them and cross into Jordan immediately. The new regulation may make matters very difficult for the residents of the territories, as they say it will. They say that from now on they will have to waste precious time waiting in line and giving explanations for their trip. In this context they point to the residents who are held up for many hours in the Civilian Administration's offices.

The Civilian Administration's spokesman explains that the new arrangement does not constitute a change in policy and is intended to regulate bridge crossings now that summer visits are beginning. The spokesman did not answer a question as to whether the old practice will be resumed at the end of the summer visits.

Inhabitants of the territories point out that the new procedure ties them to the Civilian Administration, which they do not recognize, and increases their dependence on it. Therefore, they believe that this procedure is only intended to make it possible for the Civilian Administration to exercise better supervision over them and use it as a tool for applying pressures. The procedures for crossing from the Gaza Strip to Egypt through the Rafah Checkpoint have not been changed.

CSO: 4400/289

ACHOUR REVIEWS POLITICAL ROLE OF UGTT

Tunis LE MAGHREB in French No 54, 1 May 82 pp 22-28

[Interview with Habib Achour, UGTT president, by Laroussi Amri: "Achour Opens Up"; date and place not specified]

[Text] Mr Habib Achour answered our questions in French.  
His answers are reproduced verbatim.

[Question] How do you assess the progress made since the interdiction has been lifted?

[Answer] I would say that, since the interdiction has been lifted, we have made very encouraging progress, thanks to the work we have been able to accomplish--both on the national and on the international level.

Nationally, the executive bureau of the UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor] met on the very day the interdiction was lifted and determined what problems required immediate attention and what problems could wait. Among the problems requiring immediate attention, there were problems such as lay-offs, strikes, salary increases, and other equally important problems such as statutes and collective bargaining agreements. All these problems were discussed and a huge amount of work started; with a lot of effort, we have been able to accomplish a lot.

I cannot give you a detailed list of all we have accomplished, it was in all the newspapers. What I can tell you is that the working class has given its full participation in solving many problems. At UGTT, especially today, work is based on rank-and-file participation, and it is the rank-and-file who impose guidelines on the officials. I am therefore pleased with the work accomplished since the interdiction has been lifted, all the more so as a number of union members have been able to obtain excellent results on their own. To crown these results, and apart from the general salary increase, there has been an increase of certain bonuses which were already paid in the transportation, steelworking and various other sectors.

Another cause for satisfaction is the joy and enthusiasm of union members in their struggle to improve their lot. A reason for reassurance is that the union movement is becoming healthier and that the differences which had existed for a long time are beginning to disappear and are replaced by true brotherhood. This very brotherhood is what will enable the union movement to overcome its problems.

[Question] How far has union unity progressed?

[Answer] It is a fact that the working class has been divided for a very long time. And even since the release of certain of our comrades.

There were those who had come after 26 January and, naturally, clashes--if I may use that word--became more pressing and more aggressive when, at union meetings, they would meet with those who had been released and those who had been dismissed after the 26 January strikes.

At these meetings, intended to renew the union, such considerable differences became apparent that at times it was difficult to accomplish anything. Or else, the pressures exerted on the rank-and-file would force the comrades to accept things which, if entirely free, they would not have accepted.

Naturally, when unions were created after 26 January, most comrades did not want to step forward as candidates and the direction of the essential organs and that of the UGTT sections and organs, up to the central bureau, were taken over by people elected by a very small minority.

The situation was such that either there was no direction, or it consisted of people who had not been duly elected, or who had been elected by a very small minority. Since then, these unions were not renewed until the Gafsa congress. At the Gafsa congress, many pressures were exerted. First, there were lists which did not reflect actual facts; for instance, a union with 100 members was listed with maybe 600, maybe 1000 members. As a result, there were a large number of delegates to these regional union and section congresses. Thus, everything was distorted and that gave rise to discontent, the kind of discontent that is still existing today, for instance in Sfax. Almost everywhere now, there is a desire for a renewal. I am not implying that the comrades who are at the UGTT have not been duly elected, on the contrary; they were elected after the Gafsa congress which, after all, still represents the majority.

Due to the differences that existed then, a large number of active rank-and-file members were not represented and were making themselves heard in different ways. This unrest is now contained by the presence of militants with sentences on their records and whose dedication to their organizations is beyond any doubt; we are working together to calm the people down and take care first of the interests of the working class. In this respect, I believe that great progress has been accomplished and everytime a congress takes place it does so in the most democratic forms, like the Sfax congress which took place in the past few days. Our UGTT is confirming itself, it is becoming increasingly free and aware of the role it plays and naturally it will try--and manage--to dissipate all these misunderstandings and to make of the workers a people of brothers and friends, aware of their role and working in the interest of the working class.

[Question] Has not the creation of the position of UGTT president resulted in a situation that is out of the ordinary?

[Answer] Indeed, in our country we always had a general secretary to head the union, but in many countries, especially in Europe, there is a position of president. The general secretary is the vice-president and we get along fine.

[Question] What is the present state of mind of the rank-and-file?

[Answer] The rank-and-file is very proud of its organization. It knows that it is working toward the unity of the workers. It has brought enthusiasm to this task, especially as results are noticeable, namely salary increases, negotiations on collective bargaining agreements. All this creates a vast field of action which, unfortunately, is obstructed by the employers who do not even want government arbitration.

At present, the employers--who have become very arrogant after they received the support of the Nour government and after the disaster of 26 January--do not even accept that the government should preside over the commissions. All the employers will allow, is for the government to sit at the negotiations, no more no less. By taking this position, the employers are slowing down the conclusion of the collective bargaining agreements, which will not go without some unrest. In my opinion, the government should not allow itself to be intimidated by the employers, against whom I have no animosity, although their positions often do not make sense. It is surprising that the government should allow itself to be treated that way, letting its influence in the commissions be reduced to nothing, and the work of the latter often disturbed.

[Question] There is some turmoil in certain regional unions which, after the union congress at Sfax, also wish to have a congress. This is the case in Bizerte, Beja, Nabeul. What do you plan to do.

[Answer] I do not believe that there is any turmoil. But there are differences which arise because, sometimes, a bureau is not duly elected or because there is a disagreement on some thing or other in a given bureau. We have met with several comrades from several unions, but we advise them to calm people down and to wait; when the day comes, they will hold their meetings in a democratic manner and the best will be elected. Then, there will no longer be any problem. We are not in favor of turning things upside down, on the contrary; but when the situation of a union or of a region is rotten, we cannot allow attacks on the principles of unionism or the defense of workers, as is happening in Sfax. When a difference is between union members, we do nothing. But when an official or officials cooperate with people who are not union members, or act against the very interests of the workers--as is also happening in Sfax--we cannot accept that, and we must intervene to remedy the situation, and the best way to improve the situation is to hold a congress.

[Question] There was a time when people would speak of "Achour's UGTT." Now, they say "the UGTT with Achour."

[Answer] As far as I am concerned, it is the same UGTT, whether Achour's or with Achour.

[Question] "Achour's" means "belonging to Achour"?

[Answer] I do not believe that people think that way. At worst, even if it is mine, it can only be free and independent. Because I gave my blood, my life, my soul, because my closest friends fell for the UGTT, and for all these reasons I cannot imagine it otherwise than free and independent.

When the times were hardest, when Saya was leader of the PSD [Destourian Socialist Party] and was writing to ask us to renew the union under party leadership, then we felt free in spite of all pressures.

[Question] What is your final opinion on union participation to the National Front. Do you think this participation has contributed to union unity?

[Answer] The UGTT participation to the National Front has had its time. Not all union members were enthusiastic, but that participation took place all the same. Our elected comrades are defending the UGTT point of view in Parliament. They are disciplined and remain UGTT militants. In our opinion, they are there to defend our point of view.

They defend our views when it comes to the budget, to taxes and many other problems. That includes liberties, when it comes to discussing the situation of those who are interned, the political prisoners; they are there to support and defend them. Whether they succeed or not, they are scoring points and in the long run, with the support of the people, their position--which is dear to the UGTT--will prevail.

[Question] How would you define the present relations between the UGTT and the government?

[Answer] Union work is the same in Tunisia as in all modern countries; the union enjoys full freedom of action. The UGTT is free to choose the way and the action it thinks is best. The government is the arbitrator in case of conflict and the UGTT sees it as the arbitrator of the situation and sometimes as an employer--the largest employer--since civil servants are UGTT members and since a large number of offices and companies belong to the state. Nevertheless, even under these conditions, it remains the arbitrator in case of conflict.

[Question] Do you feel that both parties are complying with the 18 February 1982 agreements and are you satisfied with these agreements?

[Answer] These agreements were not forced upon us: we have signed them and we abide by them. Nevertheless, there remained some questions which they did not solve. As far as schools are concerned, in spite of strikes which took place after the agreement, no result has yet been achieved, but we believe that we will soon arrive at a serious and reasonable solution, satisfactory to all parties. Negotiations are in progress, and it is in everybody's best interest to arrive at an agreement to end this serious conflict. The UGTT insists that a solution must be found.

[Question] Have there been excesses on the part of the employers since the February 1982 agreements?

[Answer] Lay-offs are frequent and mostly unjustified. It does not take much to lay off a worker or an employee. Of course, this causes strikes. Even union representatives are not spared. And when a strike is triggered by such measures, they say we are responsible. Any reason is good enough for them to lay off an employee. We can discuss for months and still see no results, or insignificant results. In spite of this, they feel they are making a very great sacrifice.

[Question] The union has refused to take part in any public poll whatsoever concerning the Plan. What are the reasons for your position?

[Answer] We have modified our working methods thanks to the presence at UGTT of a large number of intellectuals and experts in all fields. Before, when we would ask for a salary increase, we used to say: "I want 10 dinars per month," without giving any reason. Why? Because the cost of living had increased. No other explanation.

We can now make very detailed studies which take all data into consideration. These studies are compared with those of the government and, most of the time, our studies are as accurate, and sometimes more accurate than theirs, and we insist on obtaining our due share.

As far as the Plan is concerned, we still have not received the drafts. We are told that discussions will start on 10 May, and it will take us at least 3 months to study the draft Plan. Even if we receive it today or tomorrow, it becomes impossible, and it is a mockery to present something which is meaningless. We do not want to submit a botched up job, without any studies, when our organization has earned a reputation for thoroughness and organization. That does not mean that we are against the Plan, but we have not done anything that would enable us to say that we participated in the realization of that Plan.

[Question] Is not that a retreat compared to the position taken at the time of the legislative elections, a position of participation?

[Answer] Participation can take place only with a minimum chance of success resulting from work and a serious preparation. In view of the short time allowed, this is impossible. The UGTT does not want a useless participation. We must know where we are going. The UGTT represents hundreds of thousands of workers... I believe that the people and the government will not hold this against us. On the contrary, they must acknowledge the seriousness of our position.

[Question] How do you feel now about your 1978 trial?

[Answer] It has left me with the worst memories of my life. To be tried without a lawyer, the investigation not completed, my dossier unseen, the defense witnesses which I had called not heard, to be tried because I am told that, in his book, Saya has written this or that, that gives me the impression that... It is too painful to say for those who administer this justice, what they can do to reduce to nothing people who have only done their duty. I never thought that hatred could reach such heights. When a lawyer says: "I have no dossier, I cannot assume your defense," when other lawyers are appointed by the court and I ask them: "Have you received a dossier, are you in a position to assume my defense," and they answer "no" in front of the court, what does there remain to do? To take me to the guillotine, that is all. I do not know how things could have come to that. This is the worst memory of my life, especially as it came from people I have known, who know me, and who know what we can do and what we have done for our country.

What I can add is that I usually forget and forgive to those who have harmed me, and I also know how to readapt myself and get along with those who love their country, their organization, to try again to unite in our organization, and to give respect and dignity to our country, and ensure that liberty and fraternity reign in it.

[Question] What are the terms of the amnesty you are suggesting?

[Answer] No man should be imprisoned because of his opinions or the positions he takes. We shall uphold these principles for all political trends. All trends should be free to practice the policy of their choice; but when a given trend is subjected to injustice, we are there to give it moral support, and we shall do so equally for all trends.

Our support to political prisoners, to freedom, finds an expression in our congresses, at our meetings, through resolutions, motions, etc. The UGTT has a certain weight in the country and out of the country and, eventually, our resolutions are heard.

[Question] What have you done until now for the imprisoned islamists?

[Answer] I have made public interventions everywhere. To speak up in their favor at all meetings, from Sousse to Medenine, do you think it is not much?

[Question] What are your views on multipartism in Tunisia. What are the political trends and movements which you want not only tolerated but recognized by the law?

[Answer] Multipartism is necessary in a democratic country. It is multipartism that generates progress. Besides, in countries without multipartism, there is no progress, there is a dictatorship. As for the trends which we would prefer, 12 orientations are represented at the UGTT and, as an official, I cannot say that I sympathize with a given trend rather than with another.

[Question] You say that 12 political or opinion trends are represented at the UGTT. How do they coexist?

[Answer] With our comrades, we have spoken the language of unionism, of true fraternity, and I am happy to note that we have achieved positive results, viz. serious discussions at our meetings where these trends are represented, and the people who lean toward this or that political trend have become truly comrades, and the idea that triumphs is not that represented by those with the larger number of political friends at the meeting. More than once, I have seen a comrade receive the support of trends other than his, and disapproved by his own. In other words, democracy and reason are stronger than political orientation.

[Question] Do you not fear that the UGTT, like the university, will know internal struggles?

[Answer] Far from it, very far from it. I am certain, and I solemnly affirm that union members, wherever they are, will work for their UGTT, that they will support within their own party the views and programs of the union movement.

[Question] In your opinion, what parties should exist?

[Answer] In my opinion, the following trends should exist: a Destourian party, a socialist party, a communist party, an Arab nationalist party, and also a bourgeois party.

[Question] How would you feel about a national coalition government that would include the PSD, the UGTT and a few opposition parties?

[Answer] In my opinion, the UGTT will never participate.

If there is a national coalition government, it will be appointed by the president of the Republic; he, and he alone, decides on the creation of the government.

[Question] Why?

[Answer] Because to participate in the government is to become an employer and a unionist at the same time.

As unionists, we have had unpleasant experiences in the past. History has shown that this would only lead to failure. You cannot be both an employer and a unionist.

[Question] One way or the other, our relations with our neighbors have changed. What do you think of them?

[Answer] I would like to see these relations change in the direction most favorable to all, i.e. in the direction of fraternity and mutual understanding. And if the people are left alone, be sure that there will be peace with the Libyan as well as with the Algerian. Our people is hospitable, it has potential, it does not have to envy the fate of other countries. I believe that the Tunisian are politically educated and that, whether or not they are workers, the Tunisian are very much interested in politics. They love their country and would not want to harm it in any way.

[Question] What is your ideal of justice and liberty. How would you see it translated into facts?

[Answer] It is the life I now have at the UGTT, I am free both in my actions and my decisions. I take orders from no one. I have only the UGTT authorities and the higher interest of the country to take into consideration.

[Question] What is your ambition? Why did you decide to make a political come-back?



[Answer] My ambition is to ensure that the UGTT remains free and prosperous. I believe in the principles I have fought for; I went to prison six times and we are now beginning to enjoy the fruit of our sacrifices, including the freedom and independence of the UGTT; for, when the UGTT is free and independent, it affects all the people.

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